

African Burial Ground News

*Learn from the past
to prepare for the future.*

VOLUME 4, NO. 1 • SPECIAL EDITION • FALL 2005

The African Burial Ground Project and Office of Public Education & Interpretation are fully funded by the U.S. General Services Administration

African Burial Ground Office of Public Education and Interpretation Moves to 290 Broadway

The US General Services Administration (GSA) has announced that the ABG Office of Public Education and Interpretation will be moved to 290 Broadway as of October. The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture will manage these services during the transition period while the National Park Service solicits comments on the management alternatives offered for public consideration and until a determination is made regarding the future management of the African Burial Ground.

GSA expressed its deep appreciation to Dr. Sherrill Wilson and the OPEI staff and volunteers who worked diligently to provide public education and interpretation services at the African Burial Ground site, the offices in the World Trade Center and on Varick Street, and at many public forums and meetings focused on the African Burial Ground Project.

For information on ongoing public education and interpretation services call (212) 264-2201. Or visit www.africanburialground.gov.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TO ISSUE DRAFT REPORT ON AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

The National Park Service (NPS) is honored to assist in planning the future of the African Burial Ground. In September 2003, the NPS entered into an Interagency Agreement with the General Services Administration to prepare a report on alternatives for the future management, operations and interpretation of the African Burial Ground. NPS also provided technical assistance to GSA on the selection of an appropriate memorial design.

The National Park Service will soon issue a draft report on future management options for New York City's African Burial Ground. The report notes that the future character and management of the African Burial Ground will be important factors in stimulat-

Continued on page 3



African Burial Ground memorial design winner Rodney Léon posed for photographers at the African Burial Ground in Lower Manhattan.

Rodney Léon Tapped To Design African Burial Ground Memorial

Winner to Create Memorial for 17th, 18th-Century Africans

The U.S. General Services Administration, in partnership with the National Park Service, announced Rodney Léon as the designer who will create the African Burial Ground permanent memorial in New York City.

GSA Administrator Stephen A. Perry said the integrity and thoroughness of the selection process would soon result in an exterior memorial befitting the national and international significance of the African Burial Ground, and one that will provide a deeply enriching experience for this generation and all that will follow.

Rodney Léon was one of five designers selected from 61 applicants to an initial call for proposals in 1998. Throughout the design competition, design profes-

sionals of African descent offered advice and counsel. In June 2004, NPS convened the five finalist designers for a series of public forums in New York City's five boroughs. The finalists presented their designs for public comment and each designer revised their designs based on public feedback from these presentations. Throughout September 2004, the public was able to see the completed designs and comment on them at six locations in New York City's five boroughs, as well as on the African Burial Ground Project web site.

"My design tells the story and speaks to the greatness of a people who never ceased to push for freedom," said Rodney Léon. "Their story began in Africa, and the origin of my design was born there too. By traveling to Africa and incorporating the shapes and forms, as well as the essence of the culture and people, I have

Continued on page 2

AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND TIMELINE

June-October. GSA and NPS solicit public comments on memorial design and five design finalists present to the Source Selection Evaluation Board and Memorial Advisors

2003

February. Five exterior memorial design finalists announced



2004

October. The 419 excavated human remains are reinterred at African Burial Ground Memorial site following the five-city *Rites of Ancestral Return* ceremonies



October. First anniversary of reinterment marked with commemorative weekend, *Africans in the Americas: Celebrating the Ancestral Heritage*

RODNEY LÉON, *Continued from page 1*

created a *living* memorial to the ancestors and their stories.”

“The National Park Service has been privileged to assist GSA with the selection of a memorial design for the African Burial Ground,” said Maria Burks of the National Park Service. “Clearly Rodney Léon’s work will prove a fitting and lasting testament to the legacy of the Africans and African Americans who helped build New York City and this nation.”

“This beautiful memorial is of national and international significance for those of us who are African Americans as well as other people of African descent worldwide,” said Congressman Charles B. Rangel of New York’s 15th Congressional District. “It will stand as a permanent symbol of our caring and concern that our ancestors buried here receive their just recognition and respect.”

Rodney Léon’s Statement on the African Burial Ground

The African Burial Ground represents a unique opportunity and responsibility for all of us ... to tell our story to the world and to specifically honor the memories of the ancestral Africans who have passed. It’s a story and history of both extreme sacrifice and profound contributions that Africans have made to the creation of the United States of America. The African Burial Ground Memorial serves not only as a memorial to educate the descendant community but also to educate the world community at large.

No longer should one be able to walk past this site or throughout Lower Manhattan and not be provided the opportunity to know, understand, acknowledge, and respect the important contributions that ancestral Africans have made to this district.

Our generation has been entrusted with this awesome responsibility, and we’re honored. We embrace it in honor of the memory of those ancestral Africans who are buried here so that their sacrifices were not in vain.

We embrace it so that all of us today will begin a new phase in the process of educating ourselves and the world about the importance of this site and everything it represents. We embrace it for our children and for all future generations so that they may come to know, understand, acknowledge, respect, and be proud of their history.

Coming Events

September 30-October 2, 2005

Annual Celebration of the Ancestral Heritage Weekend

African Burial Ground
Duane Street between Broadway
and Elk Street

See schedule on back page.

Tuesday, November 14, 7:00 p.m.

A Summit on Slavery in the Curriculum

Moderated by: Howard Dodson

Schomburg Center for Research
in Black Culture

515 Malcolm X Boulevard at 135th Street

NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

170 Central Park West at 77th Street

October 7, 2005-March 5, 2006

Exhibition: *Slavery in New York*

Inspired in part by the discovery of New York City’s African Burial Ground, this exhibition reveals the rich cultural legacy produced by enslaved Africans and honors New Yorkers who fought to abolish it. For exhibition and complete program information visit: www.ny-history.org.

The following exhibition programs are being presented by the New York Historical Society in collaboration with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture:

Tuesday, October 18, 6:30 p.m.

Slavery in the Americas, Slavery in New York

Lecture by Howard Dodson, Chief of the Schomburg Center

Saturday, October 22, 11:00 a.m.

The African American Freedom Trail: From Slavery to Freedom in New York City

Tour of historic sites where enslaved and free Africans lived and worked, led by Christopher Moore, Research Coordinator at the Schomburg Center

Thursday, January 19, 6:30 p.m.

The Enduring Legacy of Slavery

Panel: David W. Blight, Richard F. America, Mary Frances Berry, John McWhorter, and Charles Ogletree

Co-sponsored by the New York County Lawyers’ Association

Tuesday, February 7, 6:30 p.m.

The African Burial Ground: Studying the Early African Americans in New York

Panel: Howard Dodson, Michael Blakey, and Jean Howson

September. NPS releases draft of Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground report for public comment, with final due by December

September/October. Annual Celebration of Ancestral Heritage Weekend includes consecration of memorial site ceremonies

September 28. Ceremonial groundbreaking for exterior memorial

2005

January. GSA accepts completed History and Bio-skeletal reports from Howard University and posts them online. Archaeology Report and artifact reproductions for use as educational resources to be completed by Fall

April. Rodney Léon announced as winner of memorial design competition



2006

Future Initiatives

- Production of integrated/popular report on findings of studies
- Completion and dedication of exterior memorial
- Design of interpretive center

ALTERNATIVES,

Continued from page 1

ing widespread public understanding and appreciation of its historic and social significance to the American people and to those who may visit from around the world. It underscores that visitor facilities worthy of the magnitude of the African Burial Ground's importance should accommodate the intellectual and physical needs of all who seek an understanding of the site, its history, the people interred there, the times in which they lived, and the burial ground's continuing relevance to today's society.

Building on the work done in the past and taking into account the scholarship completed for the site and the public input received during 2004 the National Park Service drafted the forthcoming Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground. The report will offer management alternatives for public consideration as well as a suggested mission statement, mission goals, interpretive themes and scenarios.

• • •

The report will be available on September 28. Please visit <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>. Click on <Plans/Documents Open for Comment> and go to Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground to view the report. It will also be available at www.africanburialground.gov. To



request a copy of the report please contact the National Park Service at:

Email: NPS_AfricanBurialGround@nps.gov

Telephone: (212)825-6887 or (215)597-1570

Mailing address:

National Park Service
African Burial Ground
Technical Assistance Project
200 Chestnut Street, 3rd Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Comments on the Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground will be accepted for 30 days after the release of the report and can be submitted in the following ways:

Electronically at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>. Please click on <Plans/Documents Open for Comment> and go to Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground to view the report.

Written comments can be mailed to:
Tara D. Morrison, Project Manager
National Park Service
African Burial Ground
Technical Assistance Project
200 Chestnut Street, 3rd Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19106

You may also hand-deliver comments at public open house gatherings to be held on Saturday, October 22 at the Brooklyn Public Library from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Monday, October 24 at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

African Burial Ground News. This special edition newsletter is produced for the African Burial Ground Project by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Inquiries about the Project can be sent to:

African Burial Ground OPEI
290 Broadway, New York, NY 10007
(212) 264-2201

This publication is made possible with funding from the U.S. General Services Administration.

Celebration of Ancestral Heritage Weekend 2005

Meditations on Compassion and Healing

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture has announced the schedule for the annual African Burial Ground: Celebration of the Ancestral Heritage Weekend. Activities will run from Friday, September 30 through Sunday, October 2. The focus for this year will be preparation for the exterior memorial, with special moments dedicated to those whose lives have been ravaged by Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast, famine in Niger, and suffering in Haiti.

If you would like for your school to participate in the Youth Assembly and Ring Shout call (212) 491-2234 to make reservations. All events at the African Burial Ground Memorial Site are open to the public, and there is no charge for admission.

Friday: September 30, 2005

Youth Ring Shout & Consecration/Affirmation Ceremony

10:00 a.m.

Youth Assembly & Ring Shout Ceremony with MC Lyte and cast members from *Drumstruck*. Begins on Chambers Street, between Broadway and Centre Street and moves to the African Burial Ground Memorial site at Duane & Elk Streets.

Noon

Ecumenical Consecration/Affirmation Ceremony to prepare for the African Burial Ground permanent memorial with spiritual leaders and The McCollough Invaders, the United House of Prayer for All People brass band

2:00 p.m.-Midnight

Vigil

7:00 p.m. Jazz Tribute: Louis Hayes with The Cannonball Adderley Legacy

8:00 p.m. Spoken Word Tribute: Russell Simmons Def Poetry. For reservations for open mike presentations between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. or between 10 p.m. and Midnight call (212) 491-2040.

Saturday: October 1, 2005

Celebration of Ancestral Heritage

African Burial Ground, Duane & Elk Streets

10:00 a.m.

African Diasporan & Native American Drummers Fanfare

11:00 a.m.

Ecumenical prayers & music with The African Burial Ground Tribute Choir and The Silver Clouds Singers and Dancers

Noon

Cultural Celebration with Phylicia Rashad, Avery Brooks, Taye Diggs, and James McDaniel and artists representing the African Diaspora: Wyclef Jean, Kaissa and Ileana Santamaria.

Sunday: October 2, 2005

Noon-5:00 p.m.

African Burial Ground memorial site open for visitation

3:00 p.m.

Tribute Concert, Schomburg Center

The Spiritual: An Underground Railroad featuring Kevin Maynor. For ticket information call The Shop at (212) 491-2206.



**African Burial Ground
Office of Public Education & Interpretation
290 Broadway
New York, NY 10007**

www.africanburialground.gov